



**H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021.
Appropriations Hearing
Conservation and Development
Department of Housing
February 11, 2020**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a statewide private, non-profit legal organization. The Center provides holistic legal representation for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. I am the Director of Operations at the Center and Director of the Homeless Youth Advocacy Project, which provides legal services to youth throughout the state. Additionally, I co-chair the Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Taskgroup of the Reaching Home Campaign, the campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut. With more than 200 participating organizations representing a variety of sectors, Reaching Home works to develop public policies, community support and resources that will bring an end to homelessness in Connecticut. More information about the Campaign, the Workgroup and the Opening Doors for Youth Plan can be found here: <http://www.psychousing.org/youth-and-young-adults-homelessness-workgroup> .

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I write today to ask you to support funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports- in particular, the Homeless Youth line item of the Department of Housing, the only state funding for homeless youth.

The Homeless Youth line item provides \$2.3 million for youth outreach services, crisis housing for youth, and housing services and supports. These are vital services to transition youth from crisis to stability. This program is essential for addressing homelessness amongst unaccompanied young people. More than 5,000 youth were estimated to be experiencing homelessness or serious housing instability in the statewide Youth Count.¹

We recognize that Connecticut is in a place where tough choices must be made in our state budget. Governor Lamont, past Governors, and you, our legislative leaders, have long understood and supported the importance of ending homelessness in our state in both fiscal and human terms.

¹ "Connecticut Counts, Annual Point-in-Time Count and Youth Count!," May 2018, available at <http://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CT-Counts-May-2018-v2.pdf>.

Because of this, Connecticut is a national model in ending homelessness and, in particular, youth homelessness. Ending Veteran Homelessness and the recognition Connecticut received for the work to end chronic homelessness both exemplify this.

Currently, the Homeless Youth Program has more than 300 youth on their waitlist for youth-specific housing.² The program also has critical- but very limited- emergency beds for youth. Without the Homeless Youth Program, many of the more than 5000 youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability will not have a place to sleep.

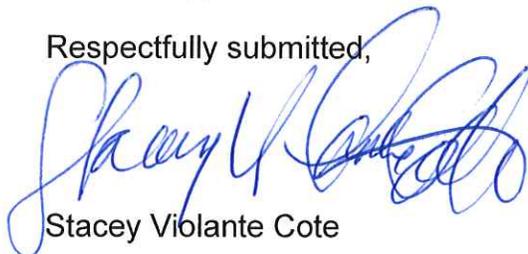
These youth are vulnerable. They need immediate services when they experience homelessness. The findings from the Homeless Youth Count tell us that of the 5045 homeless and unstably housed youth:

- **25%** indicated they were **encouraged/pressured/forced to exchange sexual** acts for money, drugs, food, clothing or protection; of youth who were currently being coerced, **20% were 16 and 17 year olds**;
- **1/3** reported they've been in the **care of the Department of Children & Families or foster care**;
- **1 in 5** spent time in **juvenile detention, prison or jail**;
- **22%** of youth disclosed **where they were currently staying was not safe** and **another 5% did not know if it was**; and
- **Only 42%** of **18-24** year olds were **employed**.³

The data is echoed in the voices of the youth who call us on a regular basis saying they have no place to go, are sleeping in hallways, and need help.

The Homeless Youth Program is a life-line for these extremely vulnerable youth. Please support this funding.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacey Violante Cote

² This is in addition to the "By Name List" of youth identified by the homeless system as needing housing.

³ "Connecticut Counts, Annual Point-in-Time Count and Youth Count!," May 2018, available at <http://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CT-Counts-May-2018-v2.pdf>.